

**MATERIAL EVIDENCE REPORT:
CILHI 2000-129-A-01 Through 10**



by

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U.S. ARMY CENTRAL IDENTIFICATION LABORATORY, HAWAII

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BACKGROUND

This case involves the 28 September 1972 loss of an F-111A aircraft, which resulted in two unaccounted-for American service members, Maj William C. COLTMAN and 1stLt Robert A. BRETT Jr. The aircraft departed Takhli Royal Thai Air Force Base, Thailand, for a strike mission near Yen Bai, North Vietnam. The last contact with the crew was when it entered Lao airspace. The crew did not return from their mission, and extensive search efforts failed to locate a crash site. The loss was designated REFNO 1929.

Between 1993 and 1997, numerous teams searched for potential REFNO 1929 crash sites in northern Socialist Republic of Vietnam without success. The site was finally located in northern Laos Peoples Democratic Republic (L.P.D.R.) by an Investigative Element (IE) team in 1998. In March 2000 an IE team with an anthropologist from CILHI returned to the site and excavated a 2-x-2 m test unit around a large fragment of flight suit. Based on the results of the test unit, the site was recommended for immediate excavation. Site excavations were conducted during Joint Field Activities (JFA) 00-4L from 27 May through 20 June 2000, 00-5L from 27 May through 20 June 2000, and during 01-1L from 28 September through 1 November 2000.

Life support items were repatriated to Joint Task Force Full Accounting for analysis. The recovered material evidence and human remains were repatriated to the CILHI and assigned the combined accession number CILHI 2000-129 (multiple accessions are associated with REFNO 1929 including CILHI 2000-035, CILHI 2000-081, CILHI 2000-082, CILHI 2000-119, and CILHI 2000-129).

MATERIAL EVIDENCE

Material evidence described below was obtained from multiple excavations by joint U.S./L.P.D.R. teams. Table 1 lists the number and types of artifacts assigned to individual accession numbers and details the accession history of all materials analyzed. Table 2 lists all pertinent physical characteristics (e.g., length, width, thickness) of the artifacts. Photographs in text have accession sub-designators listed for individual artifacts, when pertinent. Brief cleaning with a soft brush and water, or some removal of corrosion with an Exacto blade was conducted on the artifacts to aid in identification.

Table 1. Consolidated List of Material Evidence, CILHI 2000-129-A.

Consolidated Accession Number	Original Accession Number	Material Evidence	Number	Figure(s)
2000-129-A-01	2000-035, 2000-081, 2000-082	U.S. coins (pennies, dimes, quarter)	9	1
2000-129-A-02	2000-081	P-38 can openers	2	2
2000-129-A-03	2000-081	Necklace	2	3
2000-129-A-04	2000-081	Ball-link chain	1	4
2000-129-A-05	2000-119	Pen fragments	3	5
2000-129-A-06	2000-035, 2000-081, 2000-082, 2000-119	Watch bands and components	10+	6
2000-129-A-07	2000-082	Comb pieces	3	7
2000-129-A-08	2000-119	Leather gloves	2	8
2000-129-A-09	2000-119	Cloth	1	9
2000-129-A-10	2000-119	Metal pieces	2	10

Table 2. Pertinent Physical Characteristics of CILHI 2000-129-A.

Accession Number¹	Length (cm)	Width (cm)	Thickness (cm)	Diameter (cm)	Comments
2000-129-A-01a 2000-129-A-01b 2000-129-A-01c 2000-129-A-01d 2000-129-A-01e 2000-129-A-01f 2000-129-A-01g 2000-129-A-01h 2000-129-A-01i	All coins are consistent with the standard dimensions found in modern currency.				Penny – 1972 Penny – 1972 Penny – 1972 Penny – 1972 Penny – 1970 Penny – 1970 Dime – 1970 Dime – 1966 Quarter - 1965
2000-129-A-02a 2000-129-A-02b	3.9 3.8	1.7 1.7	0.4		
2000-129-A-03a 2000-129-A-03b	31.5 13.4	0.2 0.2			Combined weight is 5.1 grams
2000-129-A-04	5.2	0.2	0.2		
2000-129-A-05a 2000-129-A-05b 2000-129-A-05c	5.5 3.6 2.3	0.9 0.7 0.7			A-05b and A-06c are from the same pen

Table 2. Pertinent Physical Characteristics of CILHI 2000-129-A.

Accession Number ¹	Length (cm)	Width (cm)	Thickness (cm)	Diameter (cm)	Comments
2000-129-A-06a	20.3	1.8	0.2	2.6 2.8 3.2	A-06a length is the combined length of 3 separate pieces
2000-129-A-06b		1.6	0.35		
2000-129-A-06c					
2000-129-A-06d					
2000-129-A-06e					
2000-129-A-06f	2.1	0.2			
2000-129-A-07a	7.0	1.4	0.4		A-07a is a conjoin of 2 separate pieces
2000-129-A-07b	3.1	1.4	0.4		
2000-129-A-08a	10.4	8.6			A-08a is the left glove and A-08b is the right
2000-129-A-08b	10.8	7.5			
2000-129-A-09	47.0	12.5			
2000-129-A-10a	2.2	1.3	0.5		
2000-129-A-10b	1.8	0.8	0.4		

¹ sub-designations apply only for analysis purposes and not for accession tracking

CILHI 2000-129-A-01**U.S. coins****n = 9**

Nine U.S.-minted coins were recovered from the excavations of the site (Figure 1). Provenience information indicates that they were from multiple units and a variety of depths. The collection includes six pennies, one quarter, and two dimes. The coins have date stamps from 1965 to 1972 (four were minted in 1972), and at least three different mints are represented. They are corroded, scratched, and coated with light-colored sediment.

**Figure 1. The coins recovered from REFNO 1929.**

CILHI 2000-129-A-02

P-38 can openers

n = 2

Two P-38 can openers were included in the accession. They are fashioned of metal, have suspension holes, and a curvilinear sharpened mechanism that is used to open a can (personal communication, Denny Danielson 2001). Both are rusted shut and are coated with brown sediment (Figure 2).



Figure 2. P-38 can openers.

CILHI 2000-129-A-03

Necklace

n = 2

Two lengths of a silver-colored metal chain were recovered from the same excavation unit. The chain is fashioned of flattened oval loops linked together (Figure 3). The chain is primarily composed of silver, with trace amounts of aluminum and strontium, as determined by a Scanning Electron Microscope analysis to determine elemental composition. The chain sections do not necessarily link together, though they appear to be the same chain. Several areas of both lengths are apparently burned and tarnished.



Figure 3. Necklace fashioned from silver flattened links.

CILHI 2000-129-A-04

Ball-link chain

n = 1

A small segment of ball-link chain was included with the accessions. The segment includes 16 balls linked together. It is consistent in size and construction with ball-link chains used for hanging identification tags around the neck. Brown sediment coats the metal (Figure 4).

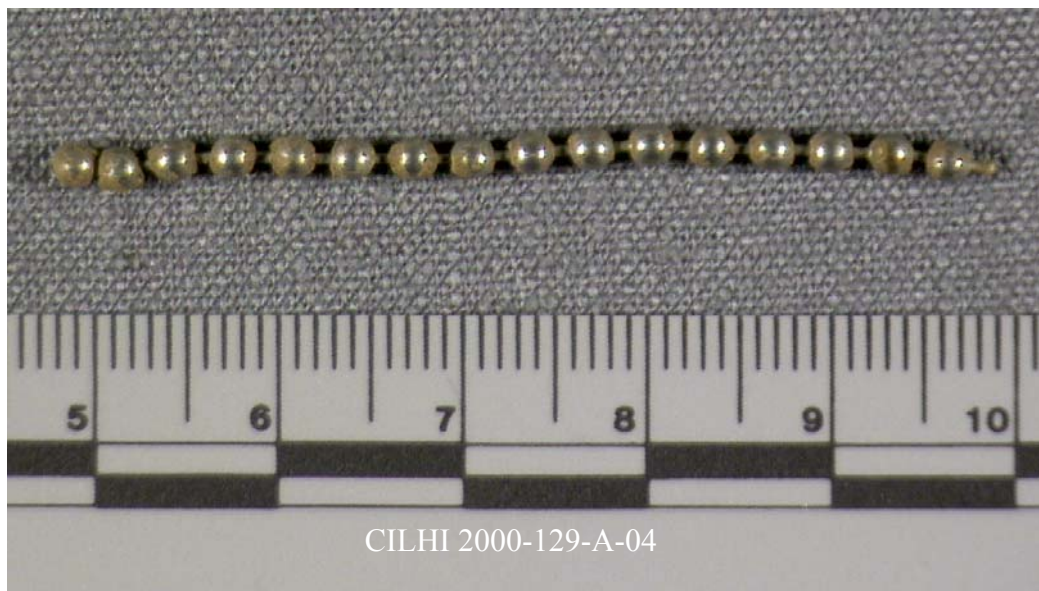


Figure 4. Silver-colored metal ball-link chain segment.

CILHI 2000-129-A-05

Pen fragments

n = 3

Three segments of two different types of ball point pen were found at the site. A clear plastic pen is represented by the ink end of the pen, ending in the threads used to attach it to the rest of the pen body. The pen has a metal insert running most of its length. It is melted, cracked, and scratched. The second pen is represented by two segments of a black octagon-shaped plastic body. The letters "U.S. GOV" are present on one piece and the pieces do not conjoin. It is broken into at least five segments, of which only two are present. All of the pen portions have adherent brown sediment.



Figure 5. Badly damaged ink pens.

CILHI 2000-129-A-06

Watch bands and components

n = 10+

Fragments of two different style watches were found scattered across the site. The first band style is a silver and gold colored link, with the gold running the center of the band (Figure 6-a). A wrist clasp is present for this band and lettering on it states "Goldfilled" on its interior. The clasp is bent and twisted and it also has one pin associated with it. This band is non-expandable, except by removing links. The second watchband is gold and silver colored, with the gold running along the outside of the band (Figure 6-b). The silver rectangular links in the center are raised above the outer band. The silver color sections of the band appear to be a coating rather than the base metal. Several pieces of this band are where it joins with the watch; each link is stamped with the following information "SPEIDEL PAT. 2,689,450." Links next to the watch bear the following information "STAINLESS STEEL BOTTOM CAPS 69" and "10 K.G.F TOP

CAPS.” It is an expandable style band and is consistent with a Twist-O-Flex metal expansion watchband produced by the Speidel Company, U.S.A.

Other watch pieces, including a crystal, a mechanism, a bezel, and a pin are also in the assemblage (Figure 6-c through f). Due to the poor condition of the junction points between band and watch, none of these pieces can be definitively assigned to a given band. The bezel has glue spots along the positions of the hours, but no numbers are retained. The watch mechanism is corroded and rusted, and the crystal appears to be heat altered. All of the watch components and bands have adherent brown sediment and are badly damaged.



Figure 6. Representative sample of the recovered watch pieces. Note two different band styles (1st column and 2nd column).

CILHI 2000-129-A-07

Comb pieces

n = 3

Three black plastic comb pieces are present for analysis; two of the pieces conjoin to form a larger fragment of the comb, including the end. The comb has two different sized teeth, large and small. The conjoining fragments have the letters “ACE” stamped on one surface and “RD

RUBBER” on the reverse. The comb is now faded and appears greenish in color. It is missing several large segments to be a complete specimen and no whole teeth are present. Brown sediment is present on its surfaces.

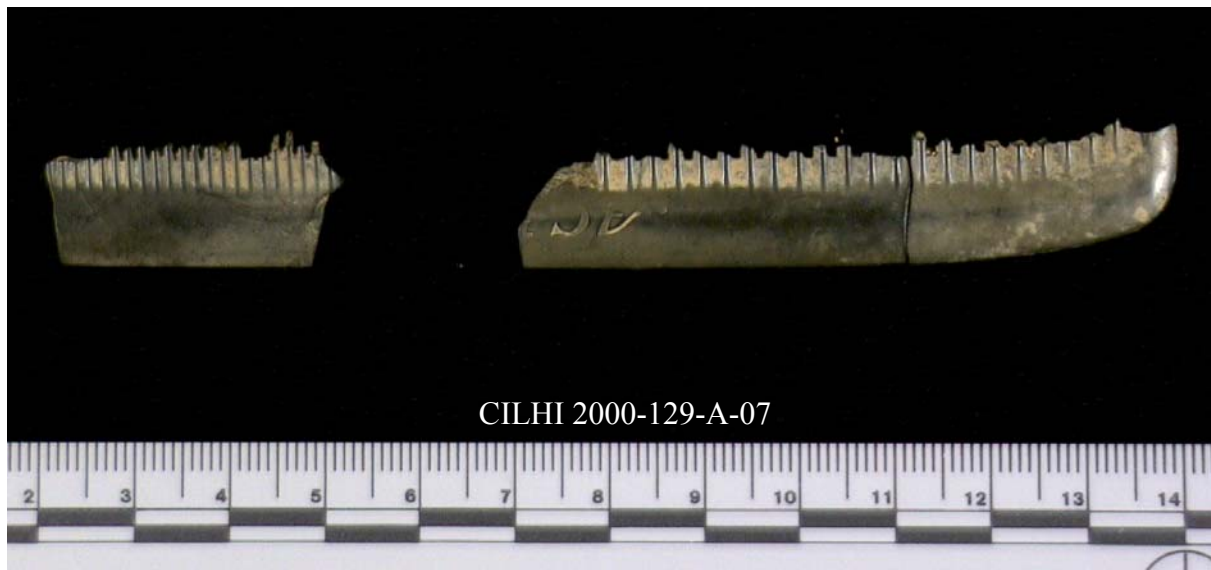


Figure 7. Black plastic comb fragments.

CILHI 2000-129-A-08

Leather gloves

n = 2

Two fragments of leather gloves were recovered together on the site. They were entwined together, as if they had been wadded up and placed in a pocket. The brown leather is still relatively supple. The surviving pieces are both left and right hands (Figure 8). The right-handed glove fragment is the smallest of the two, with the thumb, a partial palm, and a backside present. The left-handed glove has the thumb, a partial index finger, the third and fourth fingers are whole, a partial fifth finger, a palm piece, and a backside present. The backside pieces exhibit stitching indicative of an expandable area and it is quite possible that they were backed with elastic. The seam stitching is quite solid and appears to be manufactured rather than homemade. Roots are present throughout the gloves, as well as brown sediment. No markings or sizing information could be located on the leather, and it is unclear if these were issue items or privately purchased.

CILHI 2000-129-A-09

Cloth

n = 1

A portion of a green, tightly woven, lightweight cloth is included in the materials for analysis (Figure 9). Surviving areas of stitching, and its weave, indicates that the cloth is not of local Asian manufacture. Rows of double stitching and curvilinear seams are present. The cloth edges are frayed, ripped, and torn, and several are burned. Roots have grown through several areas of the material and light brown sediment coats the fibers. The original use of the cloth cannot be determined due to its small size and non-diagnostic features.



Figure 8. Leather glove fragments. Note possible expandable area on right specimen.



Figure 9. Unidentified green cloth fragment.

CILHI 2000-129-A-10

Metal pieces

n = 2

Two small metal pieces were returned to CILHI for analysis. Both are similar in appearance and features, including having a split seam leading to a round hole, with a small hexagonal nut as a method of tightening the seam (Figure 10). One is basically triangular in shape, the other more “keyhole” in appearance. They remain shiny with minor corrosion and have adhering brown sediment. No solid conclusions are drawn as to their functions, though they may have been wire holders or other aircraft parts.



Figure 10. Two unidentified metal objects.

FINDINGS

The U.S. minted coins in this accession are dated between 1965 and 1972; since several of the coins were dated 1972, it is highly likely that the site was formed in that year or slightly thereafter (the coins represent a *terminus post quem* of 1972). The silver chain and comb fragments are of likely non-military issue and were probably personal items belonging to the occupants of the aircraft. The leather gloves also appear to be items that would have been purchased on the economy rather than items issued to military personnel. Two separate watchbands are present, which is highly suggestive of two individuals being in the aircraft at the time of the incident. Other artifacts such as the ball-link chain, P-38 can openers, and the ballpoint pens are consistent with items that would have been used by or carried by U.S. flight personnel during the Vietnam Conflict. Most of the artifacts had adhering brown sediment

indicating that they were buried for an unspecified length of time. No other determinations are made from the material evidence associated with CILHI 2000-129-A.

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